

This Master Plan is an official public document designed to guide the future development or redevelopment of the City of Gunnison; to create and maintain a desirable environment; and to promote public health, safety, and welfare. The plan is intended for use by Gunnison's public officials, citizens, and developers for making decisions about future development of the city and the area within its three-mile boundary.

This Master Plan addresses the relationships among the physical layout, public facilities, the provision of government services, and preservation of the community character of Gunnison. The plan establishes a framework for managing growth that preserves our quality of life while fostering a healthy economy.



While this Plan is primarily an advisory document, it is the basis for revising existing regulations, enacting new regulations, and making land use decisions. Existing development will not be affected by the plan, except that voluntary compliance with new policies will be encouraged.

The plan recognizes that protection of individual property rights is a fundamental legal and philosophical principle of the nation, the State of Colorado, Gunnison County, and the City of Gunnison. The plan also recognizes a shared vision to preserve the character, the environment and scenic qualities of our community, while working toward a more diverse economy. This plan attempts to strike an appropriate balance among all of these aspects within the community.

Community Assessment - Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

Our roadmap for the future should include a realistic assessment of Gunnison's relationships to the local environment and to the larger world. It should also include an analysis of trends as we see them affecting us in the future. Some of our strengths as a community, such as a beautiful mountain setting, also have the disadvantages of a remote location. While we have many opportunities to preserve and enhance Gunnison's high quality of life through creative and thoughtful

planning, there are forces, some beyond our control, that threaten our long-term sustainability.

Strengths

Gunnison has many attributes that contribute to a high quality of life and a viable economy, including:

- A healthy tourism industry
- Accessibility to public lands surrounding the City
- A functional airport
- A sunny climate (albeit cold!), that facilitates solar energy systems
- A beautiful environmental setting
- Good infrastructure (roads/utilities)
- A good hospital and emergency response teams
- Western State College and the cultural and economic benefits of a college town
- Historic ranching, mining and contemporary ranching community
- Extensive recreation opportunities, including parks, public lands and a bicycle-friendly community
- An engaged, well-educated public interested in the community's well being
- An attractive built environment with good infrastructure, roads and other improvements
- A well-developed arts community
- A well-established community character.
- Location on Highway 50, an increasingly popular east-west corridor

Weaknesses

Some weaknesses are inherent to Gunnison's remote mountain location while other weaknesses could be overcome with sufficient community will and strategic allocation of resources:

- A long, cold winter that requires import of most of the energy sources for heating
- Isolation, with long drives to other communities and limited competition among providers of essential products and services, such as fuel
- High cost of living associated with a remote location.

- Limited public transportation, including lack of a transportation hub with adequate parking
- Limited economic opportunities other than retail and service sectors that serve the tourism industry
- Much of the vacant land within the City requires new infrastructure, making new development more costly

Opportunities

Foresight and thoughtful planning can avoid or mitigate some of weaknesses and threats as described herein:

- Undeveloped and underdeveloped parts of West Gunnison present opportunities for quality infill within the present city limits
- Tracts of land bordering the city within the Urban Growth Boundary could be annexed, providing opportunities for high quality, sustainable development
- Local and regional entities are dedicated to promoting economic development which, with well coordinated strategies, could create opportunities for a more diversified, sustainable economy.
- Heritage Tourism is an opportunity that has, for the most part, been untapped, and could provide economic gain valley wide.
- The land development code can be modified to preserve open space; to provide mixed use development opportunities; to encourage green building practices; to encourage affordable housing; and to implement more efficient code administration.
- Physical links between WSC and downtown can be better established, which will enhance the partnership between the City of Gunnison and Western State College, cultivating student involvement in the community and vice versa.
- Improved transportation networks will enhance economic viability. Efforts include coordination with CDOT to beautify highway corridors (US 50 and SR 135); enhance valley-wide public transportation; and create new opportunities for Bike/Pedestrian/Multimodal connectivity
- The changing demographics of Gunnison's ethnic composition add diversity to our economic base and community character.
- Evaluate rising energy costs which can be mitigated through more energy-efficient design, building practices and land use patterns, such as more infill development at higher densities, which require less driving and encourage greater use of public transportation and other lifestyle changes that are less energy intensive.

Threats

Our high quality of life and long-term sustainability could be threatened by the following:

- Rising energy costs increase the cost of housing (heating) and transportation, which could reduce tourism.
- Rising energy costs could reduce tourism, Gunnison's economic life blood.
- The lack of affordable housing has threatened our economy, evidenced by housing that is priced beyond the means of our workforce; many employees have to endure long commutes with escalating transportation costs.
- Without sensitive, caring attempts to welcome and integrate racial and ethnic minorities who comprise a growing part of our local workforce, our social fabric could be threatened by the creation of an underclass that does not feel empowered and avoids participation in civic life.

Creating the Plan

Long-range planning involves many steps, including public participation as well as professional data collection techniques. The process assessed the current conditions, examined trends, and identified desired future conditions. After this information was collected, a vision statement was drafted, and alternative growth scenarios were developed. A public hearing was held to determine the preferred growth scenario.

Collection and Analysis of Data

In addition to public involvement, land use inventories and other data sources, many documents were analyzed, a list of which is located in Appendix 1.1.

Land Use Inventory

The land use map that is illustrated in later chapters was created using several sources. First, a physical inventory of industrial, commercial and residential land was done by the consultants in August and September of 2004. Second, County Assessor parcel data was used as a cross reference to the physical inventory. Third, planning staff corrected any inconsistencies and entered the data manually into the City's GIS system. Using GIS and Community Viz, land use maps were created.

See Chapter 5, Land Use & Growth.

Engaging the Public

Telephone Public Opinion Survey

Conducted in November of 2004, the survey ascertained major growth development issues facing Gunnison. Of 400 households contacted, 247 (2/3) lived in the City limits, and the remaining lived within the three mile planning area. Important issues such as housing, economic viability, and community facilities were explored. The survey is presented in **Appendix 1.2**.

Interviews

Community leaders gave invaluable, multi-faceted perspectives when interviewed by the consultants. These individuals were helpful resources throughout the process. See **Appendix 1.3** for a summary of the interviews.

Public workshops



These were held to solicit public input during the early, middle, and late phases of the planning process. The first workshop focused on issues, concerns, and special values, and was used to develop a long-range vision. The second workshop focused on land use, demographic data, and growth management scenarios. The third workshop utilized the information from the growth scenarios. The preferred growth management scenario and the draft future land use map were presented and fine tuned.

Smart Growth Workshop

Further, the City sponsored a Smart Growth Workshop in March of 2006 for elected and appointed officials, planners and developers in the Gunnison Valley.

The Steering Committee

This committee consisted of residents of the City and County of Gunnison who were appointed by the Gunnison City Council. This collaboration of citizens provided critical direction to the consultants and the Planning Commission regarding the content and subsequent presentation of the plan. The steering committee met approximately 20 times throughout the course of the Plan's development; and they

were instrumental in critiquing policy ideas. The steering committee members are listed in **Appendix 1.4**.

Planning Commission

The Planning Commission met weekly between December 2005 through August of 2006 to critique policy statements and edit the actual chapters. The Planning Commission kept in close contact with the Steering Committee and City Council liaison, and held numerous work sessions and public hearings before recommending to City Council that the Final Plan be adopted.



City Council

The City Council adopted the Master Plan at their _____ public hearing...

Gunnison's Vision Statement

Vision statements are broad, general statements that describe the natural, built and social environment of the area at some point in the future. The City's vision statement was developed by ascertaining individuals' opinions of what's important to them in a community. As the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats were evaluated, a vision of the next five, ten, and twenty years began to emerge. The following vision statement was created based on public input.

A Vision for the City of Gunnison

Gunnison is a special and unique place to live, work and play. The preservation of our natural landscape, a friendly, tolerant small town atmosphere and the opportunities these afford are important to us. A diverse, yet cohesive community, we value and respect each individuals' contribution to the greater good. Each one of us takes seriously our responsibility to be actively involved in meeting the challenges of the future with creativity, flexibility and courage. Working together, we will direct our growth to balance the needs of our society, our economy and our environment, mindful of the generations to come.

Desired Future Conditions

While the vision statement is broad and general, statements of desired future conditions reflect more specific values, issues and concerns. Often called goals, desired future conditions are long-term ideals. Since they are ideals, desired future conditions are rarely fully achieved. Statements of desired future conditions are derived from citizens' expressions of special values, issues, concerns and needs stated or implied in interviews with community leaders, at the first public workshop, in responses to the written surveys conducted by city staff and in the public opinion survey. Statements of desired future conditions are presented with each policy. For example, a policy of the City might be to promote essential housing. An action item to implement this policy might involve higher density zoning in a particular part of the City. Policies and actions are presented with each planning element, and are listed with anticipated completion dates in the final chapter (**Chapter 12: Implementation**). Policies and action items are necessary to achieve desired future conditions.

Policies

Policy ideas were suggested by consultants and City Council (based on public input), modified by the Steering Committee, interested citizens, and the Planning Commission.

Action Items

These provide specific direction that implement policies. They guide city officials, developers, and individuals who are proposing land use changes. The implementation of action items will be addressed in the final chapter.

Alternative Growth Management Tools

Staff and consultants developed alternative growth management scenarios which were reviewed by the Planning Commission and the Steering Committee for input. The scenarios were modified accordingly, and then presented to the general public at the second public workshop for discussion and comment. See Chapter 5 for the Preferred Growth Management Scenarios and associated land use map.

Community Roots



The Gunnison area has been inhabited for about 8,000 years, as indicated by archaeological evidence found at the Tenderfoot Site. In recorded history, the Ute Indians began hunting in this area in about 1650 after the horse was introduced by the Spanish. During the late 1700s, several Spanish expeditions explored the area that is now western Colorado, which included parts of the

Gunnison River basin. As early as 1830, trappers or “mountain men” searched for fur pelts in the Gunnison County area.

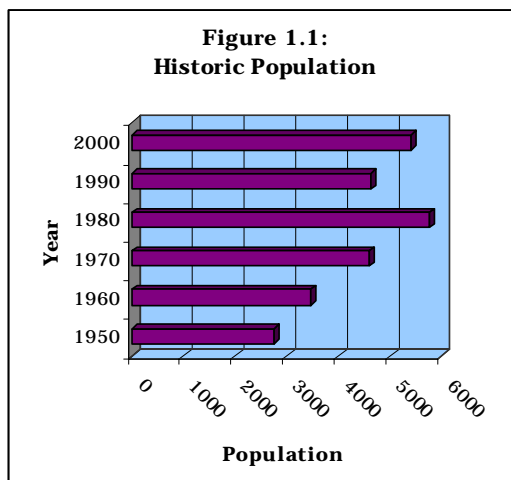
In 1853, Captain John W. Gunnison and his party of U.S. Army surveyors camped near the present site of the City of Gunnison. The first prospectors arrived in the Taylor Park region northeast of Gunnison around 1860, and in 1871, a government cow camp was established near the junction of Tomichi Creek and the Gunnison River, making its inhabitants the first documented residents of Gunnison during historic times.

Sylvester Richardson of Denver arrived with a group of settlers, primarily ranching families, in 1874; and in 1877, the town became the county seat of Gunnison County. An influx of miners occurred in 1878-79 and the city began to grow. The City of Gunnison was incorporated in 1880.

Located at the intersection of U.S. Highway 50 and Colorado Highway 135, Gunnison serves as the regional trade center for Gunnison County and parts of Saguache and Hinsdale Counties. Gunnison also serves as a hub and gateway for public land access. At an elevation of 7,703 feet, Gunnison features cool summers and sunny winters. It also features a quality of life that is attractive to tourists and people seeking to relocate. The area has unlimited access to public lands and outdoor recreational opportunities, a small-town friendly life style, a good education system and a clean environment.



From the Past into the Future: Population Growth Trends



Historical Trends

During the past century, the population of the City of Gunnison has experienced moderate, steady growth with some variation. Population of the City of Gunnison for years 1900 through 2000 at ten year intervals was obtained from US Census. Despite large fluctuations, the long-term average annual growth rate from 1950 to 2000 was 1.9 percent annually. Figure 1.1 demonstrates historic growth trends

for the City of Gunnison from 1950 to 2000.

Since the 1980's, a significant amount of rural growth has occurred in rural western states where migration rather natural increase (births

minus deaths) has fueled this population increase. Improved transportation and communication infrastructure has helped facilitate this westward trend. Additionally, retiring baby boomers has also affected this migration. Gunnison County's population has tracked with this national trend.

Population Projections

Since the City of Gunnison is the hub of commerce for many outlying areas, it is important to look at the population of the urban growth and three-mile planning areas. In conjunction with increased population, land use patterns evolve through time and require a close look at possible growth scenarios.

The Colorado Office of Demography (COD) estimates that Gunnison County population will see an annual increase of about 1.5 percent for the next 25 years. This growth trend is considered "moderate" and is used as the basis for future labor force supply and demand calculations.

Given the uncertainty of future local, regional, national, and international events and conditions, it is realistic to present future population growth as a range rather than as a single number.

Table 1.1 demonstrates the existing population figures for the City, Urban Growth Boundary, and the 3 Mile Plan Area. The table also projects population based on low,

Table 1.1 Growth Rate Ranges			
Area	Growth Variable	2000 Census	Projected Population 2025
City	Low growth (0.5%)	5,409	5,876
	Moderate growth (1.5%)		7,285
	Robust growth (2.5%)		8,717
Urban growth area	Low growth (0.5%)	6,443 (includes City)	7,262
	Moderate growth (1.5%)		9,208
	Robust growth (2.5%)		11,653
Three mile plan area	Low growth (0.5%)	8,114 (includes City & UGB)	9,145
	Moderate growth (1.5%)		11,599
	Robust growth (2.5%)		14,677

moderate and robust growth scenarios. The three population growth scenarios are based on historic trends, labor force supply and demand projections developed by COD for Gunnison County. The rationale for the each alternative growth rate is described in Appendix 1.5.

Economic Variables and Population

Several reasons support an anticipated growth trend for the area. One primary factor is retiring baby-boomers who collectively have sizeable disposable incomes and who desire to live, at least part of the year in rural mountain areas. Tourism and construction demands are other significant economic drivers affecting population increases.

The Colorado Office of Demography (COD) is working with the United States Forest Service and Region 10 on a study of second home development for the Gunnison/Uncompahgre National Forest Management Plan Update. For this study, fertility and mortality data, regional economic information from the Internal Revenue Service and other source data will be used to assess labor force supply and demand projections.

Table 1.2 is a compilation of aggregate data figures, showing the relationship of anticipated future labor force needs and population increase for the County.

Table 1.2 Labor Force Demand and Population Projections Based on 2000 Census						
Year	2006	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030
Total Jobs	10,839	11,556	12,672	13,843	14,900	15,873
Jobs % Change	-	6.6%	9.7%	9.2%	7.6%	6.5%
Population	14,189	14,910	16,226	17,457	18,765	19,951
Population % Change	0.8	1.2	1.7	1.5	1.2	1.1